sary measures to ensure the safety of passengers and their belongings during train journeys. The measures suggested by the Central Government include, *inter alia,* the need for regular meetings between the GRP and the Railway Protection Force (RPF), posting of mobile police force in running trains, improvement in coordination between the police escort and the railway staff, removal of unauthorised hawkers, urchins and other undesirable elements, prompt registration of cases at the first place of reporting, investigation of cases of dacoity and robbery by State CID, maintenance of records of gangs and criminals involved in robbcries/dacoities in trains, systematic analysis of crimes in trains, etc. The Railway administration has also taken steps to assist the GRP in checking criminal activities in running trains. These include sharing of intelligence between the RPF and the GRP, introduction of instant action groups in superfast trains to prevent entry of unauthorised persons, assistance by the RPF in escorting passenger trains during night, joint strategy involving the RPF and the GRP to deal with anti-social elements operating in trains, etc.

Stringent Punishment for certain offences

*152. SHRI RAGHAVJI:
PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA:

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to amend criminal and other laws so as to provide stringent punishment to the rapists, RDX carriers, smugglers and such other criminals; and

(b) if so, the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF HOME AF-FAIRS (SHRI L.K. ADVANI): (a)'and (b) A proposal to provide for death penalty for offence of rape is under consideration of the Government. Since Criminal Law is on the Concurrent List of the Constitution, consultation with State Governments/Union Territories Administrations is necessary before amendment to IPC is undertaken. State Governmcnts/Union Territories Administra-tions have been requested to offer their views. Besides, the proposal was discussed at the recent Chief Ministers' Conference at New Delhi. Majority of the participants endorsed the Central Government's proposal but others wanted some more time to respond to it.

A Bill has been introduced in the Lok Sabha on December 8, 1998 for amendment to the Explosive Substances Act. 1908 which *inter alia* provides death penalty, or imprisonment for life and fine for explosion of special category of explosive substance which is likely to endanger life or cause serious injury to property.

There is no proposal to amend Customs Act, 1962 or COFEPOSA Act, 1974.

Blast of crude pipeline near Nazira

*153. SHRI AKHILESH DAS:
SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Oil and Natural Gas Commission's crude pipeline was blasted near Nazira in Sibsagar district near Dikhow river at Mathachiza-Kujibali, on September 9, 1998;

(b) if so, the extent of damage caused; and

(c) how far the efforts to nab the culprits have been successful?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS, (SHRI K. RAMAMURTHY): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. The blast caused a minor fire and about 2 feet of the pipeline was blown off. No injury or loss of life is reported. Police has arrested five persons in connection with the incident.

Jail Manuals

*154. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that many jail manuals in the country are more than 40

years old, if so, the details thereof, Statewise;

(b) whether Government are aware that according to these old rules, Indian prisoners get much lesser and worse qual ity of daily diet than foreign prisoners;

(c) whether it is also a fact that the prisoners in jail in the country do not get warm blankets and clothes for cold winter months; and

(d) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI L.K. ADVANI):

(a) to (d) Prisons' is a State subject as per Entry 4 of the State List of the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India. It is essentially for the State Governments to amend and update their Jail Manuals depending upon the need. However, available information indicates that the State Governments, by and large, have been revising their Jail Manuals from time to time.

Diet scales for prisoners have been prescribed as per local requirements and food habits, etc. Woollen blankets and clothes are also provided to prisoners during the winter season keeping in view the weather conditions.

Creation of New **States**

*155. KUMARI NIRMALA DESHPANDE: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the present status of bills for creation of new States;

(b) the details of steps taken/proposed to sort out controversial/vexed issues relating to creation of new States; and

(c) by when the new States are likely to be created and the financial implications of the proposals, State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI L.K. ADVANI): (a) to (c) The Bills providing for reorganisation of the existing States of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh so as to create the new States of Vananchal, Chhattisgarh and Uttarakhand/ Uttaranchal were referred by the President to the respective State Legislatures in August '98 for expressing their views thereon as required under article 3 of the Constitution of India. The views of the State Legislatures have since been received and the matter is under further examination. As the creation of new States involves examination of complex administrative and legal issues, it is difficult to fix a definite timeframe in this regard.

Setting up of Tourist Circuits

*156. SHRI BRAHMAKUMAR BHATT: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the tourist circuits set up, so far, in the country, State-wise;

(b) whether Government propose to develop some more national tourist circuits in the country;

(c) if so, the number of tourist circuits identified for development in Gujarat; and

(d) the details of the funds allocated tor the development of those tourist circuits during the last three years, Statewise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE-IN THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM: (SHRI OMAK APANG): (a) and (b) Identification and development of tourist circuits is the responsibility of the State Governments. However, Ministry of Tourism has identified 19 circuits and 10 destinations for integrated development with the purpose of providing incentives to the Private Sector for setting up tourism infrastructure. These circuits and destinations are — Travel Circuits.

1. Kullu-Manali-Lahuk/Spiti-Leh-Monastic Circuit

2. Gwalior-Shivpuri-Orchha-Khajuraho

3. Bagdogra-Sikkim-Darjeeling-Kalimpong